

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

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TAGSC PFOR, IS, EG, US XF

SUBJECT: ISRAELIS ASSESS POSSIBILITY OF US GUARANTEES

SUMMARY: POLITICAL COMMENTATORS FEB 20 GIVE PROMINENT COVERAGE TO REPORTS FROM US JOURNALISTS THAT SECRETARY IS CONSIDERING POSSIBILITY OF US GUARANTEES TO ISRAEL. AT THIS STAGE, ISRALIS ARE BLURRING DISTINCTION BETWEEN VARIOUS TYPES OF GUARANTEES RAISED IN INTERNATIONAL MEDIA: E.G., VERBAL EGYPTIAN GUARANTEES TO SECRETARY IN LIEU OF WRITTEN NON-BELLIGERENCY DECLARATION, US GUARANTEE OF OIL SUPPLY IF ISRAEL WITHDRAWS FROM ABU RODEIS AND FORMAL US DEFENSE PACT IN CONTEXT OF OVERALL SETTLEMENT. ISRAELIS ARE DIVIDED

ON ISSUE OF US TREATY GUARANTEES, OPPONENTS STRESSING HISTORICAL UNRELIABILITY AND HIGH POLITICAL PRICE, AND SUPPORTERS EMPHASIZING BENEFITS AS EXEMPLIFIED BY SECURITY

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SITUATION OF US' NATO ALLIES. GOI MINISTERS HAVE AVOIDED

COMMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. ALL ISRAELI NEWSPAPERS FEB 20, GIVE PROMINENT COVERAGE TO STORIES EMANATING FROM AMERICAN REPORTERS WHO ACCOMPANIED SECRETARY ON LATES MID EAST TRIP (PARTICULARLY CBS' MARVIN KALB WHO IS THOUGHT TO BE ESPECIALLY CLOSE TO SECRETARY'S THINKING) THAT "SENIOR AMERICAN OFFICIALS" HAD RAISED POSSIBILITY OF AMERICAN GUARANTEES OR FORMAL US-ISRAEL DEFENSE PACT IN CONNECTION WITH SECOND STAGE EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI AGREEMENT.

2. THERE HAS BEEN NO REPEAT NO COMMENT AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL ON ANY OF THESE STORIES. HOWEVER ISRAELI "GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS" HAVE TOLD PRESS THAT SECRETARY HAD NOT RAISED SUBJECT OF US GUARANTEES WITH ISRAELI LEADERS DURING HIS LATEST VISIT HERE. HEBREW LANGUAGE PRESS AND JERUSALEM POST FURTHER NOTE THAT, ACCORDING TO THESE OFFICIALS, ISRAEL AT THIS STAGE HAS NOT RULED OUT POSSIBILITY OF US GUARANTEES, BUT IN GENERAL BELIEVES THAT ANY SUCH GUARANTEES COULD NOT SUBSTITUTE FOR FORMAL BILATERAL ARAB-ISRAEL AGREEMENTS ALTHOUGH THEY COULD CONCEIVABLY BE COMPLEMENTARY TO THEM.

3. PRESS FURTHER HIGHLIGHTS STATEMENT BY MFA SOURCE CALLING ATTENTION TO SPEECH WHICH ALLON MADE IN DEC 1973 TO LABOR PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE (AT THAT TIME HE WAS DEPUTY PRIMIN AND MINISTER OF EDUCATION) IN WHICH HE SAID THAT ISRAEL MUST EXERCISE CAUTION IN ITS APPROACH TO QUESTION OF US DEFENSE PACT. IN THAT SPEECH, ALLON SAID THAT HE WAS OPPOSED TO MERE GUARANTEES, WHICH HAD OFTEN PROVED DISAPPOINTING, BUT BELIEVED THAT A FULL DEFENSE PACT COULD SERVE TO DETER A HOSTILE SUPERPOWER.

4. HAARETZ (MARGALIT) REPORTS THAT SECRETARY HAS REFUSED TO DENY KALB'S REPORT AND HAS TAKEN NOT OF "EXCITEMENT" WHICH IDEA HAS GENERATED IN ISRAEL. HOWEVER, SECRETARY REPORTEDLY STATED THAT HE INTENDED DEFENSE PACT IDEA IN A "PHILOSOPHICAL WAY" FOR THE LONG TERM.

5. DISCUSSION OF US GUARANTEES BY ISRAELI COMMENTATORS
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AND POLITICIANS AT THIS STAGE IS RATHER GENERAL, WITH LITTLE EFFORT BEING MADE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THE VARIOUS KINDS OF GUARANTEES IDEAS WHICH HAVE SURFACED IN INTERNATIONAL MEDIA RECENTLY. THUS, WITHOUT GREAT PRECISION, ISRAELI HAVE NOTED THAT FOLLOWING POSSIBILITIES: A) SADAT'S SUGGESTION THAT IN LIEU OF WRITTEN AND FORMAL EGYPTIAN NON-BELLIGERENCY DECLARATION, EGYPT WOULD GIVE SECRETARY A VERBAL GUARANTEE TO BE TRANSMITTED TO ISRAEL AS PART OF SECOND STAGE EGYPTIAN-

ISRAELI AGREEMENT: B) PROPOSAL FOR A US GUARANTEE OF ISRAEL'S OIL REQUIREMENTS AS PART OF SAME SECOND STAGE AGREEMENT AND C) FORMAL US-ISRAEL DEFENSE PACT, APPROVED BY CONGRESS, AS PART OF OVERALL SETTLEMENT OF ARAB-ISRAEL DISPUTE.

6. BROADLY DEFINED, THERE ARE TWO MAIN SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT ABOUT FORMAL US GUARANTEES: THE TRADITIONALISTS, WHO OPPOSE THEM BOTH IN PRINCIPLE AND IN PRACTICE, AND PRAGMATISTS WHO ARE WILLING AT LEAST TO CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY. OPPONENTS STRESS THE HISTORICAL UNRELIABILITY OF GUARANTEES (THE UN WITHDRAWAL FROM THE SINAI IN 1967 IS DEP IN ISRAELI CONSCIOUSNESS) THE LIKELY DIFFICULTIES OF INTERPRETATION, AND THE RESTRICTIONS ON ISRAEL'S FREEDOM OF MANEUVER. THESE ISRAELIS BELIEVE THAT THE PRICE FOR GUARANTEES WOULD BE FULL WITHDRAWAL FROM OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, AND QUESTION WHETHER ISRAEL'S SECURITY WOULD BE ENHANCED IN THE TRADE-OFF. THEY ALSO QUESTION WHETHER US CONGRESS, AFTER VIETNAM, WOULD SUPPORT ADMINISTRATION PROPOSAL INVOLVING COMMITMENT OF US FORCES ABROAD. POTENTIAL SUPPORTERS TAKE NOTE OF ARAB POLITICAL-MILITARY STRENGTH, ESSENTIALITY OF CLOSE US-ISRAEL RELATIONS FOR ISRAEL'S SECURITY INTERESTS, AND TANGIBLE BENEFITS WHICH HAVE ACCRUED TO NATO AND OTHER COUNTRIES THROUGH THEIR FORMAL SECURITY TREATIES WITH USG. NOTED COMMENTATOR HAIM HERZOG (FORMER CHIEF OF MILITARY INTEL AND REPORTEDLY ABOUT TO BE NOMINATED ISRAEL'S AMB TO UN) TOLD RADIO AUDIENCE LAST NIGHT THAT ISRAEL WOULD BE IN GOOD COMPANY WITH EUROPEAN STATES IF FORMAL US GUARANTEES COULD BE ACHIEVED. IT IS OBVIOUS THAT CONSIDERATION OF THIS ISSUE IS JUST BEGINNING. IT IS EQUALLY CLEAR THAT IT IS NOW SQUARELY IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN.

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